

Pioneer Trail Park: Street grid clashes with setting

CITYSCAPE



■ *Joseph Linton is an architect in Salt Lake City. He welcomes other viewpoints.*

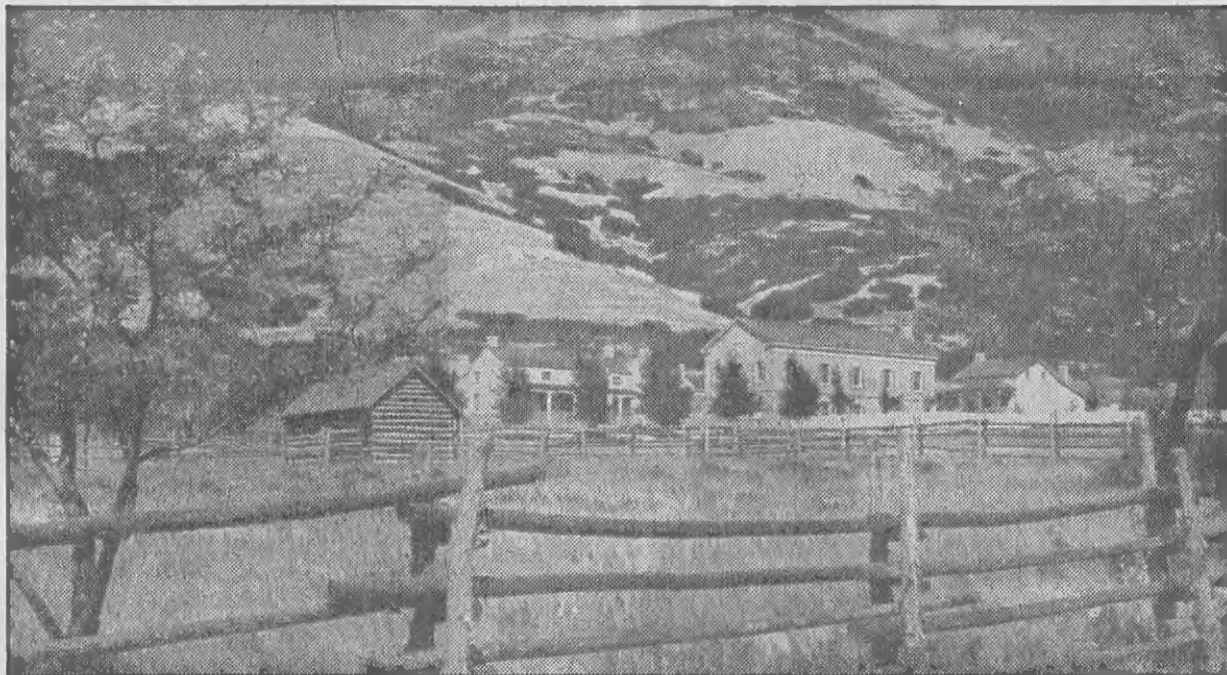
JOSEPH LINTON At the top of Emigration Canyon, nestled on some of the finest property in the Salt Lake Valley, is Pioneer Trail State Park — a reconstruction of a pioneer village as it may have looked and functioned 100 or more years ago.

If you've never been there, you should go.

The park is a sanctuary for old buildings, historically precious structures that have been moved to the park so that they would not be lost forever. The buildings are situated on streets in a tight geometric grid, aligned as they would have been during the valley's early settlement years. This pattern reflects the desires of the early Mormon leaders who wanted the streets to function well — streets that would lead travelers directly where they wanted to go. In this regard, the grid system works very well.

Nonetheless, there is something unfortunate about employing the grid street layout in Pioneer State Park, even if the pattern reflects the historic 19th century approach.

The hills in and around Pioneer State Park area roll at the base of the



Pioneer Trail State Park relies on historical street system, rather than topography.

mountain like sheets hanging on a clothesline on a windy day. On the other hand, the street layout of the park plows through the foothills in an antagonistic and clashing contrast to the natural flow of those hills. They work against, not with, the landscape.

Research Park, Pioneer State Park's neighbor to the north, avoided this unfortunate problem by aligning its street patterns with the

surrounding terrain, and the result is a more appealing environment.

And while the grid in Pioneer State Park is an accurate historical representation, it takes something away from the setting. A less formalistic street pattern would have resulted in a better overall look.

Pioneer State Park is a fun place to visit. It offers a unique opportunity to step back in time. I highly recommend it to everyone. But I am

convinced that if its streets followed the natural terrain, it would be an even more enjoyable place to visit on an afternoon excursion; and any loss in terms of historical accuracy would have been compensated for by the aesthetics.

It is unfortunate that this alternative was not considered by those who planned the area. If there are any future expansions to the park, perhaps a less rigid approach could be used.

Arts

Sunday, May 3, 1987

